

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SNAP ELECTION RUMORS PERSIST

REF WELLINGTON 3064

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: RUMORS AND SPECULATION ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A SNAP ELECTION PERSIST, WITH VALID REASONING SUPPORTING BOTH THE PROS AND CONS. ON BALANCE, EMBASSY FAVORS THE CONS. END SUMMARY.

2. PM ROWLING'S CONTINUING REFUSAL TO RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF A SNAP ELECTION HAS KEPT THIS ISSUE ALIVE FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. THOSE WHO BELIEVE AN EARLY ELECTION IS IN THE OFFING ADVANCE THE LINE OF REASONING THAT LIFE IS GETTING WORSE FOR THE NEW ZEALANDER AND THAT ROWLING WILL SEEK A NEW MANDATE FROM THE PEOPLE BEFORE DISHING OUT THE BITTER ECONOMIC MEDICINE WHICH MUST COME BEFORE TOO LONG.

3. A NEW MANDATE WOULD GIVE LABOUR A THREE YEAR LEASE RATHER THAN THE ONE YEAR WHICH ROWLING HAS INHERITED. IN THESE THREE YEARS LABOUR MIGHT WEATHER THE ECONOMIC STORM WHICH IS BREWING. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PROBABILITY IS GOOD THAT AT ELECTION TIME, A YEAR FROM

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NOW, THE COUNTRY COULD BE IN THE DEPTHS OF A RECESSION

AND WITH IT AN INCLINATION FOR A SWING BACK TO NATIONAL.
LABOUR'S VULNERABILITY WOULD BE HEIGHTENED BY A
YEAR OF CRITICISM AND SNIPING BY THE OPPOSITION.

4. LOOKING AT LABOUR'S PRESENT REMAINING YEAR, IT SEEMS
LIKELY THAT THE MAIN ELECTION ISSUES WILL GROW MORE
TROUBLESOME AS TIME PASSES. THESE INCLUDE, ACCORDING TO
A RECENT POLL, INFLATION, THE ECONOMY, SOCIAL CLIMATE,
FOREIGN TRADE, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, HOUSING, THE
ENVIRONMENT, AND LAW AND ORDER.

5. AN EARLY ELECTION WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE
RESIDUAL GOOD WILL AND SYMPATHY FOR LABOUR LEFT BY
NORMAN KIRK'S DEATH. WITH A 23 SEAT MAJORITY, ROWLING
COULD CALL THE ELECTION, GAMBLE ON LOSING A NUMBER OF
SEATS, YET STILL RETAIN (BY NEW ZEALAND STANDARDS)
ENOUGH OF A MAJORITY TO CARRY OUT LABOUR'S PLANS AND
POLICIES FOR THREE MORE YEARS.

6. THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE AN EARLY ELECTION WILL BE
CALLED CONCEDE ALL THE ABOVE ARGUMENTS FOR AN ELECTION.
HOWEVER, THEY MAKE THE STRONG AND CONVINCING POINTS
THAT, A) THE PRIME MINISTER MUST HAVE THE APPROVAL OF
HIS PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS TO CALL AN ELECTION. OF LABOUR'S
55 MEMBERS IN PARLIAMENT, 21 WERE ELECTED WITH MAJORITIES
OF LESS THAN 2000 VOTES AND MANY OF THIS GROUP WOULD MOST
CERTAINLY STRONGLY OPPOSE PUTTING THEIR SEATS ON THE LINE,
B) TRADITIONALLY AN EARLY ELECTION IS CALLED WHEN THERE
IS AN INABILITY TO GOVERN THROUGH EITHER A SLIM MAJORITY
OR PUBLIC REACTION TO GOVERNMENT ACTIONS WHICH APPEARS TO
CHALLENGE OR PLACE IN DOUBT THE ORIGINAL MANDATE. AT
THE PRESENT TIME LABOUR HAS A TREMENDOUS MAJORITY AND THERE
IS NO THREAT TO THE PARTY'S MANDATE IN THE OFFING SUFFICIENT
TO FORCE MR. ROWLING TO RISK THE IRE OF HIS BACKBENCHERS
IN EXTRACTING APPROVAL FOR AN EARLY ELECTION FROM THEM.
THUS, NO EARLY ELECTIONS. THE EMBASSY TENDS TOWARD THIS
VIEW.

7. ROWLING'S REFUSAL TO RULE OUT A SNAP ELECTION IS PUT
DOWN TO GOOD TACTICS IN KEEPING HIS OPTIONS OPEN AND THE
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OPPOSITION OFF BALANCE.
SELDEN

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